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Additional Information

1 **ABSTRACT**

2 **Study Design:** Cross-sectional study

3 **Objectives:** The main objective of this study was to develop and test  
4 classification algorithms based on machine learning, using accelerometers  
5 to identify the activity type performed by manual wheelchair users with  
6 SCI.

7 **Setting:** The study was conducted in the Physical Therapy department and  
8 the Physical Education and Sports department of the University of Valencia.

9 **Methods:** Twenty volunteers were asked to perform ten physical activities:  
10 lying down, body transfers, moving items, mopping, working on a  
11 computer, watching TV, arm-ergometer exercises, passive propulsion, slow  
12 propulsion and fast propulsion while fitted with four accelerometers placed  
13 on both wrists, chest and waist. The activities were grouped into five  
14 categories: sedentary, locomotion, housework, body transfers and moderate  
15 physical activity. Different machine learning algorithms were used to  
16 develop individual and group activity classifiers from the acceleration data  
17 for different combinations of number and position of the accelerometers.

18 **Results:** We found that although the accuracy of the classifiers for  
19 individual activities was moderate (55-72%), with higher values for a  
20 greater number of accelerometers, grouped-activities were correctly  
21 classified in a high percentage of cases (83.2 - 93.6%).

22 **Conclusions:** with only two accelerometers and the quadratic discriminant  
23 analysis algorithm we achieved a reasonably accurate group activity  
24 recognition system (> 90%). Such a system with the minimum of  
25 intervention would be a valuable tool for studying PA in persons with SCI.

26 **Keywords:** physical activity, machine learning, accelerometer, spinal  
27 cord injury

28

## 29 INTRODUCTION

30 Physical activity (PA) plays an important role in the health of persons with  
31 spinal cord injury (SCI). PA is a protective factor that reduces the risk of  
32 illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes <sup>1-3</sup> and other  
33 common comorbidities in this population (e.g., pressure ulcers) <sup>4,5</sup>.

34 An appropriate method of quantifying PA levels in persons with SCI during  
35 their daily activities is essential for several reasons <sup>6</sup>. Firstly, these methods  
36 may be used in epidemiological studies to establish more precisely the  
37 effects of PA on their health. Secondly, it can be used to monitor the  
38 effectiveness of PA promotion programs in this population. Finally, with the  
39 appropriate hardware and software, those suffering from SCI may carry out  
40 continuous control of their energy expenditure and thereby adjust their  
41 physical and nutritional habits to achieve a healthy lifestyle.

42 Accelerometers are currently the devices most commonly used to measure  
43 PA although other methods, like heart rate <sup>7,8</sup> and questionnaires <sup>9,10</sup>, have  
44 been validated for people with spinal cord injury. Early studies quantified  
45 PA by estimating energy expenditure. However recent works estimate not  
46 only energy expenditure, but also the type of activity being carried out,  
47 according to the acceleration pattern produced<sup>11-16</sup>, which is important in  
48 studies on the SCI population. The performance of certain activities could  
49 either prevent or aggravate certain health problems (e.g., shoulder pain<sup>17,18</sup>).

50 Although studies have been published that establish the necessary  
51 mathematical models for estimating types of physical activities<sup>11-16</sup>, few of  
52 them have tackled this problem in subjects with SCI. Specifically, Postma et  
53 al.<sup>19</sup> using a total of six accelerometers, were able to identify wheelchair  
54 propulsion from other activities (e.g., lying down, body transfer, doing  
55 dishes...). Their classifier achieved an accuracy of 92%. Later Hiremath et  
56 al.<sup>20</sup> classified the type of activity performed by SCI subjects using  
57 accelerometry, galvanic skin response, skin temperature and near-body  
58 temperatures. They were able to distinguish between resting, propulsion,  
59 arm-ergometer and deskwork, with an accuracy of 96.2 % using Quadratic  
60 Discriminant Analysis (QDA). Although 4 types of activities were included  
61 in this latter study, a broader study needed to be carried out in order to  
62 identify a wider range of activities. Therefore, the aims of the present work  
63 were:

- 64 1. To develop and test classification algorithms to identify a) 10  
65 individual activities, b) 5 grouped-activities, performed by manual  
66 wheelchair users with SCI equipped with accelerometers.
- 67 2. To establish the minimum number of accelerometers needed for a  
68 given accuracy for each application.

69

70

71 **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

72 *Participants*

73 Twenty subjects took part in the study [40.03 (10.57) years, 75.8 (17.54) kg  
74 and 1.76 (0.09) m]. The researchers recruited participants from two different  
75 institutions: i. *Hospital la Fe* of Valencia and ii. *Asociación Provincial de*  
76 *Lesionados Medulares y Grandes Discapacitados (ASPAYM)*. The subjects  
77 had suffered spinal damage between the T2 and L5 vertebrae, and had been  
78 diagnosed at least one year before the start of this study. The level and  
79 completeness of the SCI (**Table 1**) were determined by a complete  
80 neurological examination conducted by a medical specialist, using the  
81 American Spinal Injury Association Impairment Scale (AIS). Their  
82 independence status expressed as mean (SD) was 65.3 (7.61). This  
83 independence measurement was determined using Spinal Cord  
84 Independence Measure **version III (SCIM III)**<sup>21</sup>.

85 *Table 1 here*

86 The exclusion criteria were: i) history of depressive or cognitive disorders;  
87 ii) posttraumatic cervical myelopathy, motor or sensory impairment of the  
88 upper extremities, ischemic heart disorder, or recent osteoporotic fractures;  
89 iii) Presence of tracheotomy or iv) sacrotuberous ulcers or hypertension.

90 All the subjects gave written consent to participate in the study, which was  
91 previously approved by the university's ethical committee. We certify that

92 all applicable institutional and governmental regulations concerning the  
93 ethical use of human volunteers were followed during the course of this  
94 research.

95 *Data collection*

96 The subjects were asked to perform ten physical activities (using their own  
97 wheelchair): lying down, body transfers, moving items, mopping, working  
98 on a computer, watching TV, arm-ergometer exercise, passive propulsion,  
99 slow propulsion and fast propulsion. A detailed description of each activity  
100 can be found in a previous study<sup>22</sup>. Each activity was carried out for 10  
101 minutes with 1-2 minutes' rest between activities, with only one exception  
102 in the case of body transfers, in which the activity took place for one minute  
103 followed by one minute's rest for a total of ten minutes to avoid overloading  
104 the shoulder musculoskeletal system. All these measurements have been  
105 supervised by the same researcher to ensure the successful completion of  
106 these activities.

107 During these activities body forces were monitored by four accelerometers  
108 (Actigraph model GT3X, Actigraph, Pensacola, FL, USA) being the  
109 sampling frequency 30 Hz. A bandpass digital filter between 0.25 and 2.5  
110 Hz was implemented in order to reduce the influence of the static  
111 acceleration and the higher frequency components (manufacturer hardware  
112 characteristic). Then, the accelerations (expressed in counts) were rectified  
113 and integrated in 1-second epochs. The accelerometers were placed one on

114 each wrist, one on the non-dominant waist and on the non-dominant side of  
115 the chest (Figure 1). Elastic belts were used in order to minimize  
116 movements of the accelerometers; and the spatial orientation were similar in  
117 all the subjects.

118 *Figure 1 here*

### 119 *Signal processing*

120 The Matlab R2012a (Mathworks Inc, Natick, USA) was used for signals  
121 processing. We worked out fourteen variables for each axis (i.e. X, Y, Z and  
122 resultant vector) at minutes: four, five, six and seven for each activity.

123 The standard deviation, variance and the 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup>  
124 percentiles, interquartile range and the range between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup>  
125 percentiles were calculated in the time domain. The lag-one correlation of  
126 each minute was also worked out as a measure of temporal dynamics <sup>15</sup>.

127 The acceleration signal was analyzed using the two-level wavelet transform,  
128 the mother wavelet being Daubechies 2 <sup>23</sup>. We calculated the Euclidean  
129 norm of the detail coefficients of the first and second levels of resolution  
130 and the approximation coefficients of the second level (i.e. ND<sub>1</sub>, ND<sub>2</sub>, NA<sub>2</sub>).

131 The sample entropy was computed for each axis (tolerance=0.3 SD; patter  
132 length=2) <sup>24</sup>. Finally, we computed the cross-correlation between the three  
133 orthogonal axes (i.e., x-y, y-z and x-z cross-correlations) <sup>25</sup>. The total



134 number of variables was 59 for each accelerometer (i.e., 14 variables for the  
135 four axes and three variables for the correlation between axes).

### 136 *Data Analysis*

137 Classifiers were designed for individual-activities and grouped-activities;  
138 those for individual-activities had ten possible categories (i.e. each activity  
139 performed) and grouped-activities had five (Table 2), established according  
140 to the activity's objective or function.

141 *Table 2 here*

142 In order to determine the required number of accelerometers to properly  
143 identify the activities or groups of activities, the data from several  
144 accelerometers were combined. The configurations tested were: i) dominant  
145 wrist accelerometer, ii) non-dominant wrist accelerometer, iii) both wrist  
146 accelerometers and iv) all four accelerometers

147 The first step was to split the database (800 data = 20 subjects\*10 PAs\*4  
148 min/PA) into two data sets (figure 2). One was used to train and validate the  
149 classifiers (n=640) and the other to test them (n=160). We checked that  
150 there were no statistically significant differences in the computed variables  
151 between data sets by means of the Wilcoxon rank sum test ( $p>0.05$ ) and that  
152 the percentage of cases of each activity was the same in both data sets.

153 A principal component analysis was then applied to reduce the dimensions  
154 of the data matrix parameters. This analysis was applied to the training set

155 of the above-cited four combinations of accelerometers. These databases  
156 were reduced from 59, 59, 118 and 236 variables respectively to 22, 22, 41  
157 and 78 principal components (99% of the variance was maintained). The  
158 coefficients of this analysis of the training set were applied to the test set, so  
159 as to obtain the principal components of these data. The principal  
160 components of the two data sets were used as inputs in the subsequent  
161 analysis.

162 *Figure 2 here*

163 We used three different machine-learning algorithms to design the  
164 classifiers <sup>26</sup>: linear discriminant analysis (LDA), quadratic discriminant  
165 analysis (QDA) and support vector machines (SVM). The classifiers were  
166 designed and validated using a 10-fold stratified cross-validation, which was  
167 performed twenty times to reduce the randomization effect. The optimal  
168 combination of variables was determined using a forward sequential feature  
169 selection algorithm that included only those variables that significantly  
170 improved classifier accuracy. The feature selection algorithm stopped when  
171 the addition of any new variable did not improve classifier accuracy by  
172 0.5%. Once the classifiers were designed with the training set, we applied  
173 them to the test set and computed the classification accuracy:

$$174 \text{ Accuracy} = \frac{\text{TruePositives} + \text{TrueNegatives}}{\text{TruePositives} + \text{TrueNegatives} + \text{FalsePositives} + \text{FalseNegatives}}$$

175

176 **RESULTS**

177 Table 3 shows the accuracy of the different classifiers implemented in the  
178 test set, using the information from the different accelerometer  
179 configurations to distinguish each of the 10 individual activity types. As  
180 expected, it can be seen that in general the accuracy of the classifier  
181 improves as the number of accelerometers increases. However, the accuracy  
182 obtained is always less than 75%, regardless of the number/position of the  
183 accelerometer and the classification algorithm used.

184 *Table 3 here*

185 Figure 3 shows the accuracy of the individual activity classifiers in each of  
186 the 10 categories. It can be observed that in many activities accuracy values  
187 near or above 90% are achieved, particularly when two or four  
188 accelerometers are used. However, some activities (e.g. PC work or passive  
189 propulsion), which could be confused with each other, have particularly low  
190 accuracy values, giving a slightly low overall accuracy value for the  
191 classifier.

192 *Figure 3 here*

193 On the other hand, the grouped-activity classifiers showed good accuracy in  
194 all cases (between 83.2% and 93.6%) (Table 4). Again, it can be seen that in  
195 general, the higher the number of accelerometers, the higher the  
196 classification accuracy. In contrast, the classification algorithm does not

197 seem to significantly influence the prediction capability. It is noteworthy  
198 that there are three classifiers with accuracy values above 90%: i) two wrists  
199 with QDA, ii) all with QDA and iii) all with SVM.

200 *Table 4 here*

201 The accuracy of the classifiers for each category is shown in Figure 4. It can  
202 be observed that those with the lowest values are body transfers and  
203 locomotion. It is also noteworthy that the accuracies of the body transfer  
204 and housework categories seem to be the most dependent on the number of  
205 accelerometers used, whereas the accuracy of the other three categories is  
206 fairly stable, regardless of the number of accelerometers and algorithms  
207 used.

208 *Figure 4 here*

209 Finally, Table 5 shows the confusion matrix of the QDA classifier for  
210 grouped-activities, which uses information from the accelerometers on both  
211 wrists. As shown, the rate of properly classified sedentary activities is very  
212 high (93.75-100%) and only 6.25% of the cases of working with computers  
213 or passive propulsion are misclassified. The classification error in the  
214 locomotion category is mainly due to the fact that the slow propulsion  
215 activity is misclassified as housework in 39.34% of cases. In the housework  
216 category, high accuracy values are observed for both activities. 90.56% of  
217 the moving items cases and 85.94% of the mopping cases were properly

218 classified. 14.41% of the transferring activity cases were misclassified as  
219 housework. Finally, it is noteworthy that 100% accuracy is reached in  
220 moderate physical activity

221 *Table 5 here*

## 222 **DISCUSSION**

223 In the present work we designed and implemented several classifiers using  
224 only recordings from accelerometers in SCI patients to distinguish a) 10  
225 individual activities and b) 5 categories of grouped-activities according to  
226 the activity's aim or function. None of the classifiers obtained an overall  
227 accuracy over 73% in identifying the 10 activities, regardless of the number  
228 of accelerometers and the algorithm used. The relatively low values are  
229 most likely due to the fact that some of the activities shared similar patterns,  
230 e.g. watching television, working with a PC or passive propulsion.  
231 Additional information would be needed to overcome this limitation.

232 When the activities were grouped by their aim or function, promising results  
233 were obtained. In general it has been observed that the more accelerometers  
234 used, the higher the classifier accuracy. Three classifiers were obtained with  
235 an average accuracy above 90%: i) two wrists with QDA, ii) all with QDA  
236 and iii) all with SVM. In configurations ii) and iii), the use of four  
237 accelerometers did not provide a significant increase in the accuracy of the  
238 classifier using the QDA algorithm. Compared with configuration iii),

239 classifier i) has the advantage that the QDA algorithm is computationally  
240 much more efficient and could be easily implemented in a real-time system.  
241 Moreover, using only two accelerometers greatly simplifies the recording  
242 protocol and also improves patient comfort during recording. This suggests  
243 that the optimal setting of the classifier to distinguish the 5 categories of  
244 SCI activities tested was obtained with the QDA algorithm and the  
245 accelerometers on both wrists.

246 Sedentary activities and moderately intensive physical activities obtained  
247 good rates of correct classification (always above 93.75%). These results are  
248 comparable with those of other authors, who obtained 92% accuracy in  
249 distinguishing different activities in SCI patients<sup>19</sup>. However, in this latter  
250 study six accelerometers were used and only two categories were classified:  
251 two types of wheelchair propulsion versus other activities: lying down, body  
252 transfer, doing dishes<sup>19</sup>. The accuracy values obtained in the present work  
253 are similar to those obtained by other authors<sup>20</sup>: obtained 96.2% in  
254 identifying 4 types of activities (rest, deskwork, arm-ergometer and  
255 propulsion). Unlike other authors, who used input variables of acceleration,  
256 galvanic skin response, skin temperature and near body<sup>20</sup>, in the present  
257 work only acceleration data (from the two wrists) was used.

258 On the other hand, the accuracy values obtained for the activity recognition  
259 systems in SCI patients compare favorably with those published regarding  
260 the able-bodied population. Trost et al.<sup>16</sup> obtained 88.4% accuracy in

261 classifying activities clustered into the following categories: sedentary, light  
262 household activities and games, household activities and moderate-to-high-  
263 intensity sports, walking and running. Also in this context Khan et al.<sup>12</sup>  
264 reached 97.9% of properly classified recording time in the following  
265 activities: lying, standing, walking and running. Liu et al.<sup>13</sup> combined  
266 several sensors (two accelerometers and a flow meter) and achieved 84.7%  
267 correct classification in 13 different activities. Therefore, the activity  
268 recognition systems proposed in the present study show similar accuracy to  
269 those in other populations when considering groups of similar activities.

270 It is remarkable that the grouped-activities classifier, employing the  
271 recordings from 2 accelerometers with the QDA algorithm, often identified  
272 some locomotion activities, such as housework. In spite of the fact that rapid  
273 propulsion was correctly distinguished from other household chores,  
274 probably due to the greater magnitude of the accelerations, slow propulsion  
275 was misclassified as housework in 39.34% of cases. This may be because  
276 while performing household tasks (mopping or moving objects) the subjects  
277 had to propel the wheelchair at a slow speed (similar to slow propulsion).  
278 The inclusion of additional parameters that take into account the temporal  
279 structure of the data or the variation of the spectral parameters over time  
280 could help to improve accuracy in these cases.

281 Finally, this study has some limitations. Firstly, it would be advisable to  
282 expand the database in terms of the numbers of both subjects and activities.

283 Secondly, although some extent of variability has been included in the data  
284 used to design the classifiers since participants used their own wheelchair  
285 which could have different dynamic responses for each of the movements,  
286 the physical activities were carried out in a controlled environment,  
287 following the instructions of a supervisor, with a break between activities so  
288 as to minimize fatigue. Future studies should confirm the good results  
289 obtained in this work in conditions closer to everyday life. In such  
290 conditions events such as transitions between activities, the type or  
291 inclination of the surfaces, etc. could worsen classification accuracy. In  
292 summary, we believe that this work provides the basis for a minimally  
293 intrusive expert system that would monitor daily physical activity in SCI  
294 subjects, for whom monitoring is of great significance.

295 In short, the highest accuracy values (83.2 - 93.6%) were those obtained on  
296 activities grouped according to objective or function. Classifiers of  
297 individual activities showed lower classification accuracy (55 – 72.5%). The  
298 best performance was obtained from four accelerometers and QDA or SVM  
299 algorithms. However, an activity recognition system with good accuracy (>  
300 90%) was also achieved with only two accelerometers and the QDA  
301 algorithm. Due to the fact that 2 accelerometers are less stressful for the  
302 subject, it would be useful to implement this system in future studies to  
303 identify activities in subjects with spinal cord injuries.

304



305 **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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307 Valencia under project UV-INV-PRECOMP13-115364

308

309 **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

310 The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## TITLES AND LEGENDS TO FIGURES

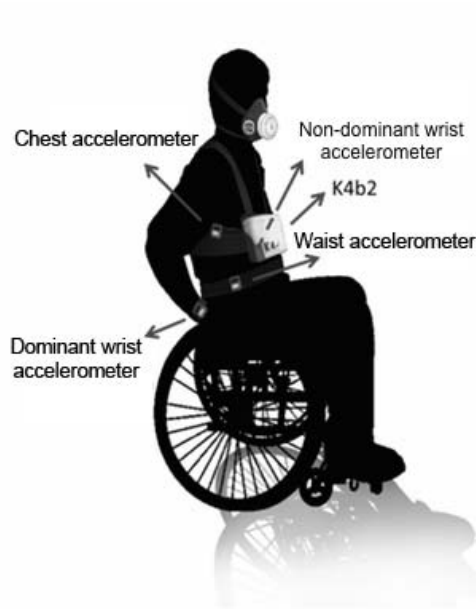


Figure 1. Location of the accelerometers

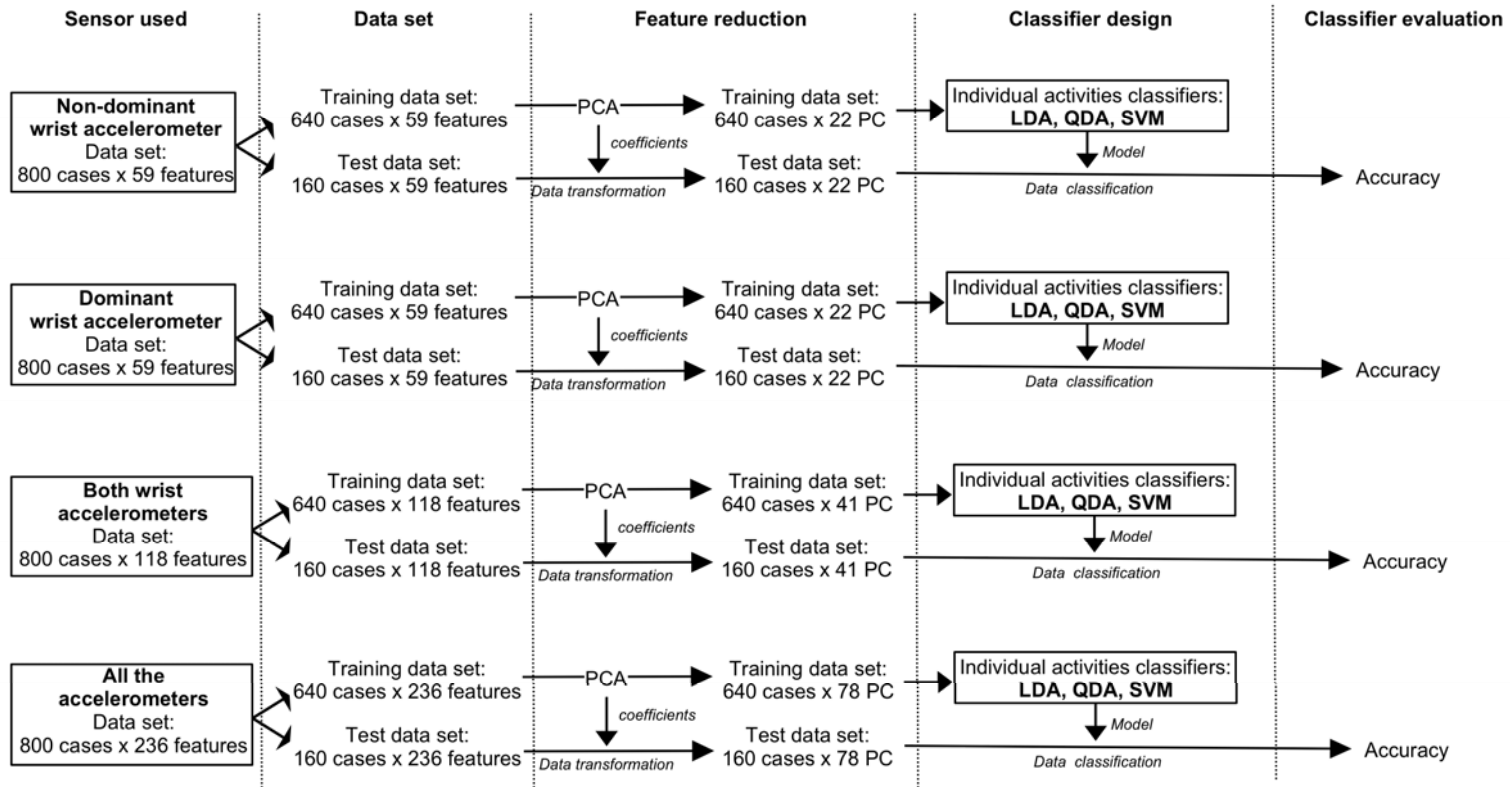


Figure 2. Schematic overview of the process to obtain the individual activity classifiers. The process is the same for individual and grouped-activity classifiers.

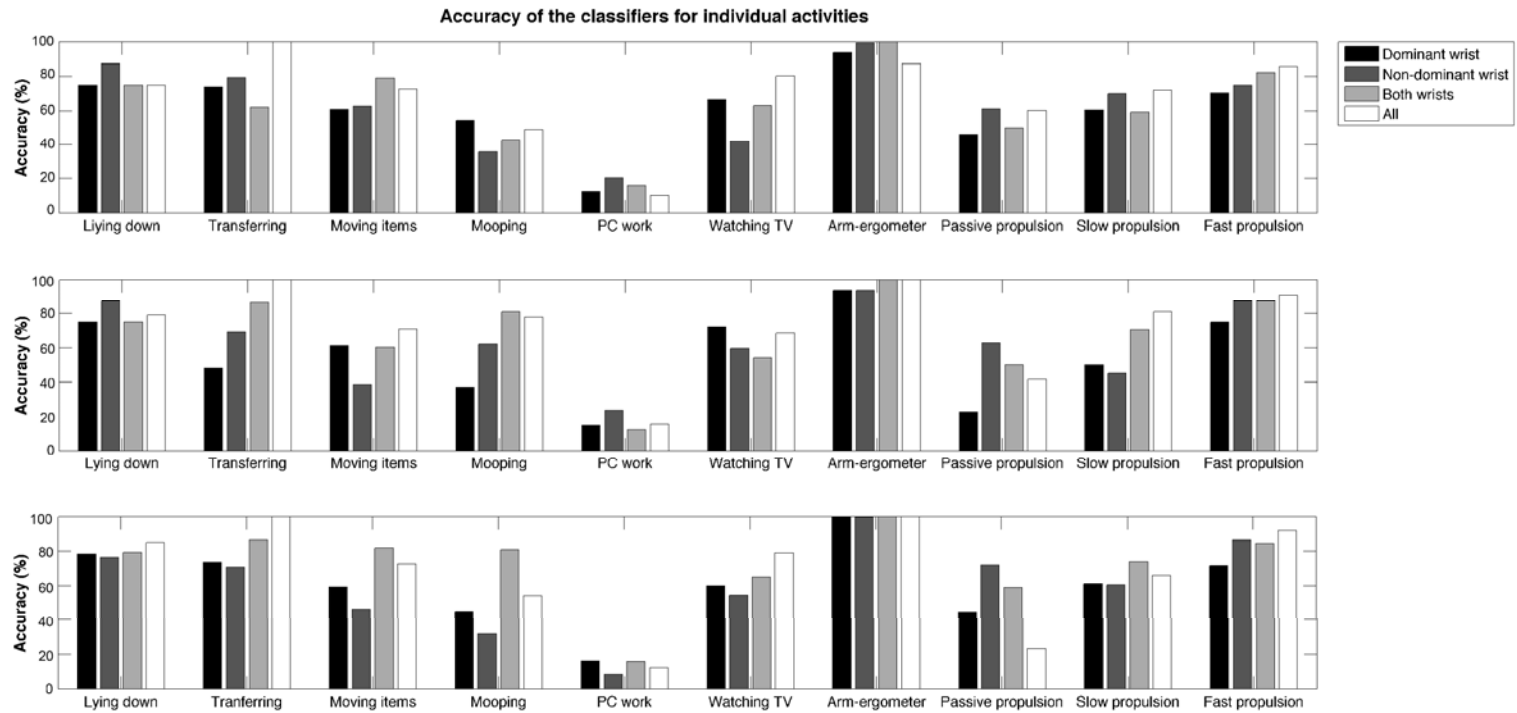


Figure 3. Accuracy of the classifiers for individual activities with the algorithms: Top- linear discriminant analysis, Middle- quadratic discriminant analysis and bottom-support vector machines.

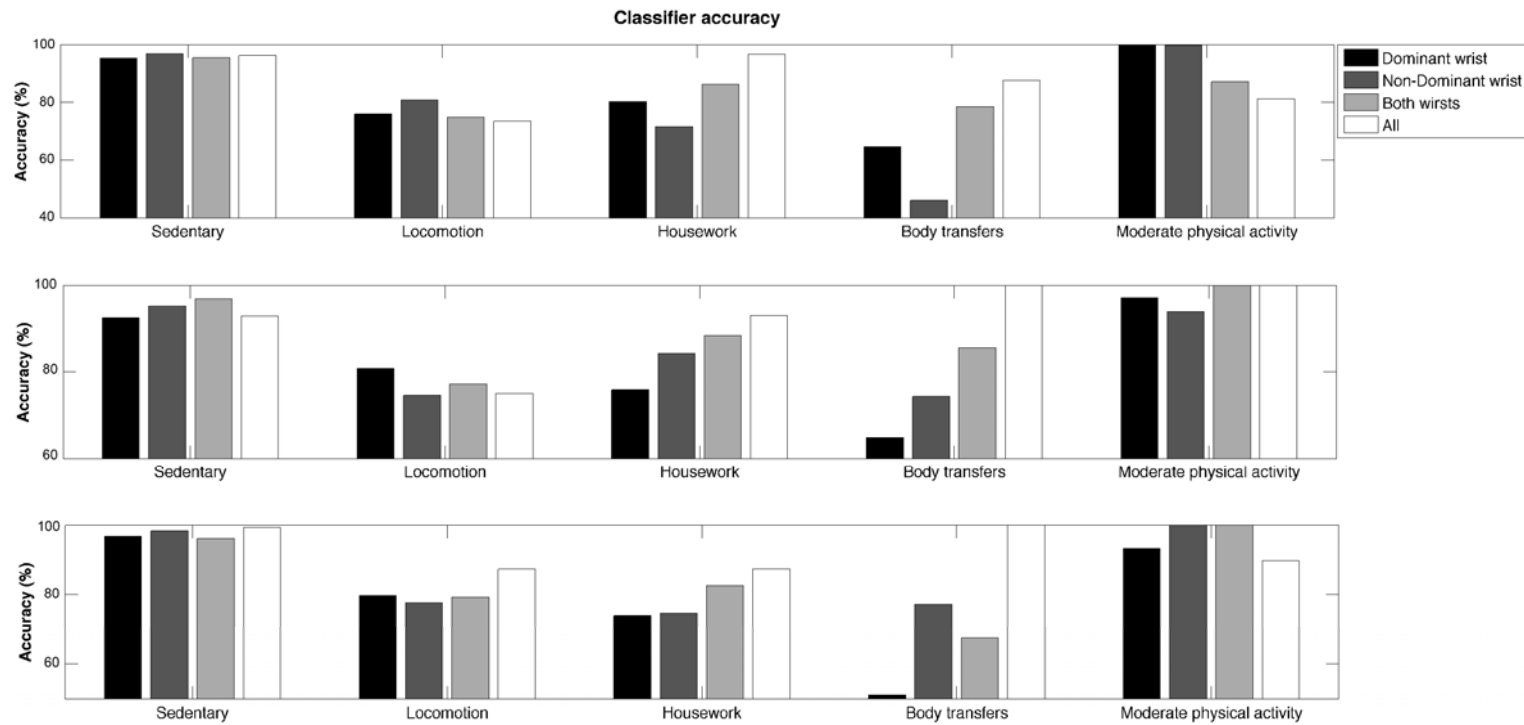


Figure 4. Accuracy of the classifiers for grouped activities with the algorithms: Top- linear discriminant analysis, Middle- quadratic discriminant analysis and bottom-support vector machines.

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Table 1. Subject's characteristics.

| <b>Subject</b> | <b>Neurological level</b> | <b>AIS Score</b> | <b>Time of injury</b> | <b>Aetiology</b>     |
|----------------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 1              | T4                        | B                | 229                   | Trauma               |
| 2              | T11-12                    | A                | 264                   | Trauma               |
| 3              | T4                        | A                | 88                    | Trauma               |
| 4              | T7                        | A                | 81                    | Trauma               |
| 5              | T5                        | A                | 24                    | Trauma               |
| 6              | T4                        | A                | 236                   | Tumour               |
| 7              | T4                        | A                | 34                    | Trauma               |
| 8              | L5-S1                     | B                | 59                    | Surgery              |
| 9              | T10-11                    | A                | 233                   | Trauma               |
| 10             | T5                        | A                | 359                   | Trauma               |
| 11             | T4-5                      | A                | 153                   | Trauma               |
| 12             | T12                       | A                | 401                   | Congenital sclerosis |
| 13             | T4                        | A                | 90                    | Trauma               |
| 14             | T5                        | A                | 290                   | Trauma               |
| 15             | T5                        | A                | 122                   | Trauma               |
| 16             | T5-6                      | A                | 79                    | Tumour               |
| 17             | T7                        | A                | 67                    | Trauma               |
| 18             | T12                       | A                | 19                    | Multiple sclerosis   |
| 19             | T12-L1                    | B                | 435                   | Trauma               |
| 20             | T5                        | A                | 193                   | Trauma               |

Time of injury is expressed in months. AIS = American Spinal Injury Association Impairment Scale.

Table 2. Accuracy of the individual-activities classifiers

|            | <b>Dominant</b> | <b>Non-Dominant</b> | <b>Two wrists</b> | <b>All</b> |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <i>LDA</i> | 61.4            | 63.3                | 62.9              | 69.3       |
| <i>QDA</i> | 55              | 63                  | 67.8              | 72.5       |
| <i>SVM</i> | 59.1            | 61.5                | 68.9              | 65.9       |

Data are expressed as a percentage of total cases that belong to that category. LDA = Linear Discriminant Analysis; QDA = Quadratic Discriminant Analysis; SVM = Support Vector Machines.

Table 3. Accuracy of the grouped-activities classifiers

|            | <b>Dominant</b> | <b>Non-Dominant</b> | <b>Two wrists</b> | <b>All</b> |
|------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <i>LDA</i> | 85.9            | 83.9                | 87.1              | 89.4       |
| <i>QDA</i> | 84.5            | 86.7                | 90.4              | 90.7       |
| <i>SVM</i> | 83.2            | 87                  | 86.8              | 93.6       |

Data are expressed as a percentage of total cases that belong to that category. LDA = Linear Discriminant Analysis; QDA = Quadratic Discriminant Analysis; SVM = Support Vector Machines.

Table 4. Confusion matrix of the QDA classifier, implemented using information from two accelerometers placed in both wrists, for grouped-activities.

|                              |                       | QDA grouped-activities classifier |                   |                  |                       |            |     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----|
|                              |                       | <i>Sedentary</i>                  | <i>Locomotion</i> | <i>Housework</i> | <i>Body transfers</i> | <i>MPA</i> |     |
| <b>Real type of activity</b> | <i>Sedentary</i>      | Lying down                        | 100               | 0                | 0                     | 0          | 0   |
|                              |                       | PC work                           | 93.75             | 0                | 6.25                  | 0          | 0   |
|                              |                       | Watching TV                       | 100               | 0                | 0                     | 0          | 0   |
|                              |                       | Passive propulsión                | 93.75             | 0                | 0.09                  | 6.16       | 0   |
|                              | <i>Locomotion</i>     | Slow propulsion                   | 0                 | 60.66            | 39.34                 | 0          | 0   |
|                              |                       | Fast propulsion                   | 0                 | 93.75            | 6.25                  | 0          | 0   |
|                              | <i>Housework</i>      | Moving ítems                      | 0                 | 0                | 90.56                 | 9.44       | 0   |
|                              |                       | Mooping                           | 0                 | 7.25             | 85.94                 | 6.81       | 0   |
|                              | <i>Body transfers</i> | Transferring                      | 0                 | 0                | 14.41                 | 85.59      | 0   |
|                              | <i>MPA</i>            | Arm-ergometer                     | 0                 | 0                | 0                     | 0          | 100 |

Data are expressed as a percentage of total cases that belong to that category. MPA = Moderate Physical Activity, QDA =Quadratic Discriminant Analysis